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## Understanding La Francophone in the Context of the Business French Curriculum

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## UNDERSTANDING *LA FRANCOPHONIE* IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BUSINESS FRENCH CURRICULUM

### ABSTRACT

This article proposes a framework by which *la Francophonie* can be presented to students within the context of the business French class. The goal may not be to pursue an in-depth analysis of each and every country and region, but rather to provide a variety of approaches according to which these political entities may be compared, not only to each other, but to the rest of the world. By adopting a comparative perspective on the French-speaking world, the instructor will avoid the dilemma of having to choose on which states/regions to focus, and the pitfalls of teaching a subject matter that may not be within the instructor's realm of expertise.

One of the greatest challenges faced by faculty teaching business French is the general lack of cultural content in textbooks designed for use in the business French (or French for specific/professional purposes) classroom. Of the twelve textbooks in print at the time of the writing of this article, none attempt to present any cultural information in a systematic fashion if, by "culture" in the context of business language, we imply such topics as general economic information, geography, institutions (educational and political, for example), etiquette, current affairs, consumer habits, individual companies, or holidays. Eight of the twelve texts do include some readings and exercises pertaining to culture, but in most cases this information is only indirectly related to the business world, and is presented in such a manner that students do not acquire a systematic knowledge of the basic infrastructure of the economy, business environment, and demographics of the French-speaking world. In many respects, the absence of cultural information in these works is hardly surprising. Most business French textbooks focus on preparation for the examinations of the *Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris*, which do not test such cultural knowledge, and hence the authors of these textbooks have not perceived the need for including this content in their works. In addition, cultural information can quickly become out-dated, and textbook authors, one might

conclude, prefer to avoid inclusion of such content rather than run the risk of their works being considered out of touch with current trends.

Exacerbating this situation even further is the complete neglect of the French-speaking world beyond metropolitan France in these textbooks. Of the twelve works analyzed, only one, *Carte de Visite* (Delcos, Leclercq, and Suvanto), mentions the existence of the French language outside of France, and then only in the form of a one-page overview of differences in selected vocabulary between the French spoken in France and that spoken in Belgium, Switzerland, and Quebec. As is the case for cultural information in general, the absence of any reference to *la Francophonie* can be explained largely by the CCIP exams, which focus exclusively, if not necessarily intentionally, on France, and which require no knowledge of the French-speaking business world outside of France, of the status of French as a global language of business, nor of the economic particularities of any Francophone country. This is not entirely unexpected, given the fact that the tests are themselves produced in France by a French agency, yet this factor has a significant effect on the content included in business French textbooks, most of which, as we have already noted, have the stated goal of preparing students for the CCIP exams. Yet it is not only the influence of the CCIP exams that explains the fact that *la Francophonie* is missing from business French textbooks. Historically, textbooks published in this field have always focused on France, which can undoubtedly be attributed to the traditional Hexagon-centric emphasis of most college-level French programs (at least in the United States). Yet as Francophone literature and culture have become increasingly visible over the course of the past thirty to forty years, a corresponding inclusion of the French-speaking world outside of France in the business language curriculum has not occurred.

Several factors explain not only the absence of *la Francophonie* from business French textbooks, but the difficulty of incorporating these countries and regions into the business French curriculum in general. First and foremost, the sheer number of nations, provinces, and territories that may be in any way considered part of *la Francophonie* leaves the instructor with a daunting challenge: how can one possibly do justice to the breadth of the French-speaking world within the confines of a single course or, if one is fortunate, business French sequence? In addition, it is undoubtedly the case that the vast majority of faculty teaching such courses have visited only a few of the countries included under the umbrella of *la Francophonie*. Subsequently, these instructors are confronted with the prospect of teaching about countries and regions of the world about which they may possess only a very limited knowledge.

Furthermore, identifying and incorporating relevant materials about *la Francophonie* in general, or individual countries and regions in particular, can prove to be challenging for most instructors. An all-encompassing approach, one that would attempt to explore in depth the entirety of the French-speaking world from a business perspective, will undoubtedly be impossible and, as a matter of fact, an unnecessary endeavor. Yet at the same time, instructors may want to identify possible means of exposing students to the diversity of the French-speaking world, especially in terms of the role these countries and regions play in a contemporary global context.

This article proposes that there is in fact a framework by which the entirety of *la Francophonie* can be presented to students. The goal may not be (and perhaps should not be) to pursue an in-depth analysis of each country and region, but rather to provide a variety of perspectives according to which these political entities may be compared, not only to each other, but to the rest of the world. The advantages of this approach are numerous. By adopting a far-reaching comparative panorama of the French-speaking world, the instructor will avoid the dilemma of choosing only a few states/regions, and of teaching a subject matter that may not be within the instructor's realm of expertise. This perspective will, in turn, provide a starting point for a more in-depth consideration of individual countries and bring to light some of the issues, both economic and social, faced by their inhabitants.

Before presenting some of these perspectives on the Francophone world, a fundamental question must be asked: for the purposes of the business French curriculum, what do we mean by *la Francophonie*? Although the answer to this question may seem simple to formulate at first, in fact there are numerous issues that must be addressed before we can determine which countries and regions will be the focus of the comparative analysis proposed here. *La Francophonie* itself lacks an established definition. The term appeared for the first time in the work of nineteenth-century French geographer Onésime Reclus, who used it to refer to anyone who spoke French: "Par 'francophones,' Onésime Reclus entend 'tous ceux qui sont ou semblent être destinés à rester ou à devenir participants de notre langue'" ("Onésime Reclus: L'inventeur du mot 'francophonie'"). It is important to note that whereas Reclus was referring to individuals speaking the French language, the more prevalent usage of the term today refers to those countries and regions of the world where French is spoken. The expression *la Francophonie*, therefore, now has socio-political implications missing from Reclus's definition (although he was, admittedly, writing at a time when the French colonial empire was in full expansion, a development that he clearly endorsed).

Yet even if we concur that, when we are speaking of *la Francophonie*, we are referring to geo-political entities, we are still confronted with a complex issue: what makes a country or region “francophone”? We must keep in mind that for the purposes of this study, we are referring specifically to those parts of the world where French is the language of business, first and foremost, but also of areas such as government, international relations, education, and the media. The existence of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), created in 1970, both facilitates and complicates the task at hand. Dedicated to interaction and cooperation between those states having the French language in common, the OIF has 56 member states and governments as well as 14 observers. Yet when one considers the list of these members, one notices that membership in the OIF does not necessarily mean that the country (or region) in question would qualify as “francophone” in terms of the language use of the population. For example, countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, and Moldavia are full members of the OIF, yet one would hardly consider them to be “francophone” in that the French language is not the primary or even secondary language of communication in these countries.

Further complicating the matter is the situation of those countries where French is indeed an official language, yet where it is a native language restricted, for the most part, to certain regions within each country. This is certainly the case for Belgium, Canada, and Switzerland. In fact, the OIF includes as members not only Belgium and Canada, but also the Communauté Francophone de Belgique, Québec, and New Brunswick, demonstrating that the geographic distribution of the Francophone population within an individual country must be taken into consideration. In the case of Switzerland, “la Suisse romande” exists as a concept, but not as a political entity (perhaps made impossible by the fact that several cantons where French is the native language for many inhabitants are officially considered bilingual).

There are also historical factors that one must consider in determining a precise definition of “Francophonie” for the purposes of the business French curriculum. Many members of the OIF are former colonies of France, and, while the French language continues to have a presence in all of them, the extent to which French is currently the language of business and international affairs varies tremendously from country to country (and undoubtedly within each country as well). To provide just one example, Vietnam is a full member of the OIF, and the historical and cultural legacy of the French colonization of Indochina is far from a distant memory. Yet, according to statistics provided by the OIF in 2007, only 0.7% of the population of Vietnam spoke French as either a native or second language. This one illustration should be

sufficient to demonstrate that our understanding of *la Francophonie* in the context of the business language curriculum must be based on the current status of the French language in the world, and not on past socio-cultural or socio-historical conditions.

For the purposes of this study, the countries included (see Table 1) have been restricted to those in which French is the official language (or one of the official languages), in spite of the fact that in several cases, the percentage of the population that is French-speaking (having French as either a native or second language) is inferior to that in countries such as Algeria, in which French does not enjoy official status (and indeed, Algeria is not a member of the OIF). Similarly, so-called micro-states such as Vanuatu and Monaco are included because of the status of French in each, and in spite of their relatively small populations, while the countries of the Maghreb are not. Certainly individual instructors are free to modify this list according to their own interests or areas of expertise, or according to the corresponding needs of students.

Table 1: Francophone countries included in present study

Belgium	Benin	Burkina Faso	Burundi
Cameroon	Canada	Central African Republic	Chad
Comoros	Congo	Congo [D.R.]	Côte d'Ivoire
Djibouti	Equatorial Guinea	France	Gabon
Guinea	Haiti	Luxembourg	Madagascar
Mali	Monaco	Niger	Rwanda
Senegal	Seychelles	Switzerland	Togo
Vanuatu			

Having established which countries will be included, and prior to considering them according to a variety of criteria, it is critical to have some notion of the extent to which the French language is used in these countries. Accurate statistics on the number of Francophones in any given country are certainly difficult to obtain, a result of varying interpretations of what constitutes a “Francophone,” and the problematics of carrying out a universal and reliable census in the countries concerned. Perhaps the most extensive investigation into this issue is that carried out by the OIF itself in its report “*La Francophonie dans le monde*,” published in 2007. Part of the report is dedicated to a listing of every country with a French presence in the world—including nations that are not members of the OIF—and the number of Francophones

in each. The writers of the report themselves caution the reader about the reliability of the statistics, indicating the frequent need to resort to estimates for certain countries for which detailed information is unavailable. Nonetheless, the findings of their research do provide us with a basic notion of the current status of the French language as it is spoken in the countries listed in Table 1 (see Table 2).

Table 2: French-speaking population by country [OIF]

COUNTRY	POPULATION IN 2005	FRANCO-PHONES	%	FRANCOPHONES PARTIELS	%
Belgium	10,500,000	4,300,000	41.0	2,000,000	19.0
Benin	8,400,000	739,200	8.8	1,402,800	16.7
Burkina Faso	13,900,000	695,000	5.0		
Burundi	7,800,000	390,000	5.0	234,000	3.0
Cameroon	16,400,000	2,950,400	18.0	4,393,100	26.8
Canada	32,270,500	9,487,500	29.4	2,065,300	6.4
Central African Republic	4,200,000	945,000	22.5		
Chad	9,700,000	1,940,000	20.0		
Comoros	670,000	312,200	46.6		
Congo	4,000,000	1,200,000	30.0	1,200,000	30.0
Congo [D.R.]	60,800,000	6,080,000	10.0	18,240,000	30.0
Côte d'Ivoire	18,200,000	12,740,000	70.0		
Djibouti	799,000	159,800	20.0		
Equatorial Guinea	500,000	100,000	20.0	200,000	40.0
France	60,700,000	60,578,600	99.8		
Gabon	1,400,000	1,120,000	80.0		
Guinea	9,500,000	2,000,000	21.1	4,000,000	42.1
Haiti	8,300,000	664,000	8.0	662,500	7.5
Luxembourg	460,000	430,000	93.5	20,000	4.3
Madagascar	17,300,000	865,000	5.0	2,664,200	15.4
Mali	13,500,000	1,107,000	8.2	1,107,000	8.2
Monaco	30,000	23,400	78.0		

Table 2, Continued

COUNTRY	POPULATION IN 2005	FRANCO-PHONES	%	FRANCOPHONES PARTIELS	%
Niger	14,000,000	1,260,000	9.0		
Rwanda	8,700,000	609,000	7.0	174,000	2.0
Senegal	11,700,000	1,170,000	10.0	2,457,000	21.0
Seychelles	80,000	4,000	5.0	44,000	55.0
Switzerland	7,400,000	1,509,600	20.4	2,072,000	28.0
Togo	6,100,000	2,000,000	32.8		
Vanuatu	220,000	99,000	45.0		

Equally intriguing for our understanding of the current and future status of the French language in the world is Richard Marcoux and Mathieu Gagné's 2003 article "La Francophonie de demain." Using an earlier version of the OIF report as their basis, Marcoux and Gagné attempt to predict how many French speakers there will be in the world in 2025 and 2050. They conclude that the Francophone population worldwide could more than triple in the space of less than 50 years (285). According to Marcoux and Gagné, the most significant factors that will contribute to this development are the rapid growth of the population of Francophone countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the improvement of education in developing countries, and the inclusion of the French language in the development of educational programs by their respective governments (285–86). What both the OIF report and Marcoux and Gagné's study reveal is that we are dealing with a large number of countries with a significant and growing population, even when the list is restricted to just those nations in which French is an official language. Yet how can we begin to understand and appreciate the complexity of the Francophone world in its diversity (both cultural and geographic), in a manner that both enhances the business language curriculum and allows us to pursue more in-depth study of individual countries and regions? In what follows, the primary concern will be to demonstrate how the nations listed above may be compared according to a variety of measures, both objective and subjective in nature. It is an exercise that may lead to more in-depth analysis of particular countries or socio-economic issues that they have in common.

The information provided in the following tables is by no means meant to be exhaustive or definitive; there are certainly many ways in which the nations of the world can be compared. For example, the web page "Country



Rankings 2010” <<http://www.photius.com/rankings/>>, by Photius Coutsoukis, lists no fewer than 388 different ranking tables, varying from the most basic information (population, age distribution, GDP) to subjects such as carbon footprints, drug consumption, and Internet usage. Other websites listed in the Appendix to this article offer an equally impressive selection of such lists from which the individual instructor or student may choose those topics that they consider most useful or relevant to their own business French class.

Given that many American students of French have little or only basic knowledge about many of the countries included, one might begin with such general criteria as total population, geographic size, location, population distribution (urban vs. rural), and geographical features (deserts, arable land, forests, mountains, etc.). The details of the preceding are not included here, since this information is easily accessible and, in the case of population, constantly changing. However, it is worth pointing out that according to the 2010 US Census Bureau International Data Base, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now the most populous country in the world with French as an official language, having surpassed France in that respect (approximately 71 million inhabitants versus 60 million, respectively).

Of greater interest here is information that would help us answer the following questions: What is the present socio-economic reality of those countries and regions that comprise *la Francophonie*, especially in terms of their place in the global economy and in their economic relationships with the United States, and what criteria best allow us to gain some fundamental insight into their socio-economic status? For the purposes of this study, the various rankings included here may be sub-divided into four categories:

- (1) Those providing general economic information
- (2) Those directly related to the business world
- (3) Those with a social or socio-economic emphasis
- (4) Those focusing on the economic ties between the US and the Francophone world

Although space precludes an in-depth analysis of each of the rankings, the hope is that this information will encourage further investigation into one or several countries, and those factors that have contributed and continue to contribute to how individual nations fare within one ranking or across several.

#### GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT PER CAPITA

In the case of the first category listed above, the most pertinent statistics concern gross domestic product, both total and per capita, since they provide an initial indication of the economic power of individual countries. In terms

of total GDP (that is to say, the value of all goods and services produced in a given country in a year), four Francophone nations figure among the 25 largest economies in the world: France (6th), Canada (11th), Switzerland (20th), and Belgium (21st) (CIA “World Factbook”). As we will see in subsequent rankings, these four countries, along with Luxembourg, are consistently highly ranked, which few would consider surprising. Perhaps more compelling, however, is how the Francophone countries rank and compare in terms of GDP per capita, since this statistic provides a more accurate picture of the relative wealth of these nations (see Table 3).

Table 3: Gross Domestic Product Per Capita (PPP) (2009 estimates)  
[CIA “World Factbook”] [194 countries ranked]

RANK	COUNTRY	GDP PER CAPITA
1	Liechtenstein	122,100
3	Luxembourg	78,000
8	United States	46,400
13	Switzerland	41,700
19	Canada	38,400
21	Equatorial Guinea	36,600
22	Belgium	36,600
28	France	32,800
32	Monaco	30,000
47	Seychelles	19,400
62	Gabon	13,900
71	Mauritius	12,400
115	Vanuatu	4,800
126	Congo	4,100
136	Djibouti	2,800
147	Cameroon	2,300
159	Côte d’Ivoire	1,700
160	Chad	1,600
164	Senegal	1,600
165	Benin	1,500
170	Haiti	1,300

Table 3, Continued

RANK	COUNTRY	GDP PER CAPITA
172	Mali	1,100
173	Burkina Faso	1,200
176	Comoros	1,000
177	Madagascar	1,000
178	Guinea	1,000
183	Togo	900
184	Rwanda	900
186	Central African Republic	700
188	Niger	700
192	Congo [D.R.]	300
193	Burundi	300

The CIA “World Factbook” ranking is just one of several for GDP per capita (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund also produce such rankings). Perhaps most striking, albeit expected in this table, is the great discrepancy between the GDP per capita in the more developed nations and that in the majority of the Francophone African countries. The notable exception is Equatorial Guinea, which stands out with its small population and tremendous revenue from oil production. This country does not fare as well according to other measures.

There are numerous indicators that provide us with a perspective of how business is conducted around the world, and what factors both encourage and inhibit international commerce in individual countries. Unlike objective data such as population or land mass, these rankings all rely to varying degrees on subjective information, utilizing criteria and sources that one might, upon closer analysis, challenge or question. However, those included here do at least benefit from the reputation of the organization compiling the rankings, and the fact that these rankings are annual endeavors, developed and refined over time by experts in the field, and are not isolated efforts.

#### INDEX OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM WORLD RANKINGS

The Index of Economic Freedom rankings, compiled by The Heritage Foundation, an American think tank, are based on ten factors, for which each country

is assigned a grade: business freedom, trade freedom, fiscal freedom, government spending, monetary freedom, investment freedom, financial freedom, property rights, freedom from corruption, and labor freedom. These rankings therefore allow for some insight into the fundamental ability of individuals and/or countries to conduct business in a given country. Table 4 presents the information in this Index for a selection of Francophone countries.

Table 4: Index of Economic Freedom (2010)

[179 countries ranked]

COUNTRY	RANKING	SCORE
Hong Kong	1	89.7
Switzerland	6	81.1
Canada	7	80.4
United States	8	78.0
Luxembourg	14	75.4
Belgium	30	70.1
France	64	64.2
Madagascar	69	63.2
Burkina Faso	90	59.2
Rwanda	93	59.1
Vanuatu	108	56.4
Mali	112	55.6
Benin	115	55.4
Gabon	116	55.4
Senegal	119	54.6
Côte d'Ivoire	123	54.1
Niger	129	52.9
Cameroon	132	52.3
Guinea	134	51.8
Djibouti	139	51.0
Haiti	141	50.8
Equatorial Guinea	151	48.6
Central African Republic	152	48.4

Table 4, Continued

COUNTRY	RANKING	SCORE
Seychelles	156	47.9
Chad	159	47.5
Burundi	160	47.5
Togo	161	47.1
Comoros	165	44.9
Congo	169	43.2
Congo [D.R.]	172	41.4

In this index, a score of 80–100 indicates that a country’s economy is considered free, with countries falling below 80 being categorized as mostly free (70–79.9), moderately free (60–69.9), mostly unfree (50–59.9), or repressed (below 50). What is undoubtedly most noticeable in The Heritage Foundation’s ranking is the relatively low score of France, at least in comparison to the other Western nations. Certainly such incongruities across the various rankings would be worthy of closer investigation. What, in France’s economic policies, results in a significantly lower score than that of Belgium, for example? By the same token, how does Madagascar manage a much higher score than the other African nations (indeed, Madagascar’s score places it barely below France)?

#### WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS INDEX

The Global Competitiveness Index, compiled by the World Economic Forum, resembles the Index of Economic Freedom in the criteria included to determine its rankings, although its focus is on the extent to which individual economies are competitive based on factors (called “pillars” by the WEF) such as infrastructure, health, education, labor market, technology, and innovation. Aspects of each country are considered that do not necessarily have a direct relationship to business (such as education), but which nonetheless have a long-term impact on the country’s ability to compete on a global scale. This index, like the Index of Economic Freedom, is subjective in nature, relying as it does on a survey of business people across the planet. However, it does also utilize objective data available for each criterion. Table 5 presents the rankings of a number of Francophone countries.

Table 5: Global Competitiveness Index (2009–2010)  
[134 countries ranked]

COUNTRY	RANKING
Switzerland	1
United States	2
Canada	9
France	16
Belgium	18
Luxembourg	21
Senegal	92
Benin	103
Cameroon	111
Côte d'Ivoire	116
Madagascar	121
Burkina Faso	128
Mali	130
Chad	131
Burundi	133

Once again, it is hardly surprising to see Switzerland, Canada, France, Belgium, and Luxembourg among the world leaders according to an index that favors highly developed nations that are already well-equipped to be competitive. What is striking here is the fact that of the 28 Francophone countries being considered in this article, only 14 are even included in the Global Competitiveness Index. Of the other 14, it must be concluded that there is insufficient data for them to be ranked. For some of the small countries, this would not be remarkable. However, for countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the lack of a ranking may be indicative of internal political instability, and the consequent difficulty of practicing business there. Nonetheless, the fact that so many countries are not included demonstrates that these surveys are not entirely reliable in presenting a complete picture of the status of some countries according to certain issues.

## EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

The World Bank Group's annual *Doing Business* report considers factors according to which the business climate within a particular country may be determined to be conducive for investors. Indicators such as getting credit, paying taxes, international trade, and employing labor are utilized in the calculation of each nation's ranking. Selected Francophone countries from this survey are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Ease of Doing Business (2010)  
[183 countries ranked]

COUNTRY	RANKING
Singapore	1
United States	4
Canada	8
Mauritius	17
Switzerland	21
Belgium	22
France	31
Vanuatu	59
Luxembourg	64
Rwanda	67
Seychelles	111
Madagascar	134
Burkina Faso	147
Haiti	151
Mali	156
Senegal	157
Gabon	158
Comoros	162
Djibouti	163
Togo	165
Côte d'Ivoire	168
Equatorial Guinea	170
Cameroon	171

Table 6, Continued

COUNTRY	RANKING
Benin	172
Guinea	173
Niger	174
Burundi	176
Chad	178
Congo	179
Congo [D.R.]	182
Central African Republic	183

With the Global Competitiveness Report and the Ease of Doing Business survey, we have clearly moved into the realm of international commerce, as these surveys address an audience in the business world interested in determining the feasibility of engaging in trade or investing in individual countries, regardless of their economic strengths or weaknesses. Although the preceding surveys do take into account some socio-economic factors indirectly related to the actual business world, other rankings, which are less oriented toward the world of business, may prove to be equally relevant for the discussion of *la Francophonie* in the business French course.

#### UNITED NATIONS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT AND INDEX

The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) considers life expectancy, education, and standard of living in determining its annual index. It thus provides perhaps the broadest perspective on the quality of life in the countries surveyed. For the 2009 report from which the information in Table 7 is taken, the top 38 countries are considered to have a “very high” index, those ranked 39–83 are classified as “high,” while those in the 94–158 range are “medium” and the remainder are considered “low.”

Table 7: Human Development Index (2009)

[182 countries ranked]

COUNTRY	RANKING
Norway	1
Canada	4
France	8



Table 7, Continued

COUNTRY	RANKING
Switzerland	9
Luxembourg	11
United States	13
Belgium	17
Seychelles	57
Gabon	103
Equatorial Guinea	118
Vanuatu	126
Congo	136
Comoros	139
Madagascar	145
Haiti	149
Cameroon	153
Djibouti	155
Togo	159
Benin	161
Côte d'Ivoire	163
Senegal	166
Rwanda	167
Guinea	170
Burundi	174
Chad	175
Congo [D.R.]	176
Burkina Faso	177
Mali	178
Central African Republic	179
Niger	182

Even outside the realm of business, the sizable gap between developed and lesser-developed nations is apparent. Indeed, the Human Development Index seems to widen the gap between them, as only Canada, France, Switzerland,

Luxembourg, and Belgium figure among those countries with a very high index score, while only one other, Seychelles, ranks as high, whereas the majority of the countries of Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa fare poorly. It is perhaps not surprising that the HDI's rankings do not differ greatly from the previous surveys, since all rely, to a great extent, on information concerning the basic infrastructure of individual countries. It is therefore valuable to consider two final indicators of a more specific nature in order to determine if a ranking based on a limited measure reveals significant differences when compared to those already listed.

#### TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) utilizes information from other polls and surveys to "... rank countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians" (Transparency International website, <<http://www.transparency.org>>). It is perhaps the most subjective of the rankings included in this article, relying primarily as it does on opinions rather than hard data. However, by its very name, the CPI indicates that it is dealing with "perceptions." Transparency International also has the stated aim of combatting corruption around the world, so its survey also serves the purposes of the organization, in particular documenting countries in which corruption proves to be a considerable barrier to conducting business. Table 8 presents selected countries from this index.

Table 8: Corruption Perceptions Index (2009)  
[180 countries ranked] 1 = least corrupt

COUNTRY	RANK	SCORE
New Zealand	1	9.4
Switzerland	5	9.0
Canada	8	8.7
Luxembourg	12	8.2
United States	18	7.5
Belgium	21	7.1
France	24	6.9
Seychelles	54	4.8
Burkina Faso	79	3.6

Table 8, Continued

COUNTRY	RANK	SCORE
Rwanda	89	3.3
Vanuatu	95	3.2
Madagascar	99	3.0
Senegal	99	3.0
Benin	106	2.9
Gabon	106	2.0
Niger	106	2.9
Djibouti	111	2.8
Mali	111	2.8
Togo	111	2.8
Comoros	143	2.3
Cameroon	146	2.2
Côte d'Ivoire	154	2.1
Central African Republic	158	2.0
Congo	162	1.9
Congo [D.R.]	162	1.9
Burundi	168	1.8
Equatorial Guinea	168	1.8
Guinea	168	1.8
Haiti	168	1.8
Chad	175	1.6

In spite of its more narrow focus and subjective basis, it is no surprise that the CPI ranks Switzerland, Canada, Luxembourg, Belgium, and France as significantly less corrupt in comparison to the rest of the Francophone world. This is perhaps indicative of the extent to which corruption in the public sector has an impact on the ability to conduct business in certain nations, especially those in which most investment originates in other countries.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX

Finally, the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy's Environmental Performance Index (EPI) uses information on air pollution, water quality and

access, climate change, and biodiversity as indicators in the areas of environmental public health and ecosystem vitality. The index's website indicates that "The EPI's proximity-to-target methodology facilitates cross-country comparisons as well as analysis of how the global community is doing collectively on each particular policy issue" (<<http://epi.yale.edu>>). Of all the rankings included here, the Yale Center's appears to be least concerned with the business world, although the latter certainly plays a role in the preservation of, or damage to, the environment. Nonetheless, with the exception of Belgium (which fares very poorly in terms of biodiversity and air quality in particular), the Western nations continue to obtain higher rankings than those countries in the developing world, the majority of which are placed in the bottom third of the index. Selected rankings from this index are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Environmental Performance Index (2010)  
[163 countries ranked]

COUNTRY	RANKING	SCORE
Iceland	1	93.5
Switzerland	2	89.1
France	7	78.2
Luxembourg	41	67.8
Canada	46	66.4
United States	61	63.5
Djibouti	75	60.5
Belgium	88	58.1
Gabon	95	56.4
Côte d'Ivoire	102	54.3
Congo	105	54.0
Congo [D.R.]	106	51.6
Madagascar	120	49.2
Burkina Faso	128	47.3
Cameroon	133	44.6
Rwanda	135	44.6
Guinea	136	44.4
Burundi	140	43.9

Table 9, Continued

COUNTRY	RANKING	SCORE
Senegal	143	42.3
Equatorial Guinea	146	41.9
Chad	151	40.8
Benin	154	39.6
Haiti	155	39.6
Mali	156	39.4
Niger	158	37.6
Togo	159	36.4
Central African Republic	162	33.3

There are certainly other pertinent indicators, many similar to those included here, that could be consulted to enhance the socio-economic and geo-political portrait of the countries and regions of the Francophone world. Both Freedom House and Reporters without Borders, for example, rank countries based on the freedom of the press, although their findings and subsequent rankings differ considerably in some cases. Equally notable is *The Economist's* Intelligence Unit's detailed quality of life index, even though only a limited number of countries are included. All the surveys reveal that there are multiple manners in which countries may be compared.

For an audience in a business French class taught in the United States, the relationship (in particular economic) between the French-speaking world and the US is also a necessary component of a cross-national comparison of *la Francophonie*. A visit to the US Census Bureau Foreign Trade Statistics Website can be revealing. An examination into the nature of international trade (both export and import), foreign direct investment, and governmental and non-governmental aid between the United States and these nations demonstrates primarily that this exchange is far from limited to that which occurs between the US and France. Indeed total US-France trade is dwarfed by that between the US and Canada, not to mention the fact that Quebec, although not included here since it is not an independent state, does more business with the United States than France does. Also intriguing is the relative importance of US trade with certain African nations, in particular Equatorial Guinea, Congo, and Chad, in which exports from these countries (primarily petroleum products) far exceed imports from the United States. At the very least these

trade statistics, both imports and exports, reveal the relative importance or marginal status of individual countries for the US market (see Table 10).

Table 10: Trade with the United States (2009)  
(US Census Bureau Foreign Trade Statistics)  
[233 countries and territories ranked]

COUNTRY/TERRITORY	RANK	IMPORTS TO US*	EXPORTS FROM US*
Canada	1	224,584	171,695
France (metropolitan)	8	33,960	24,367
Belgium	17	13,736	19,406
Switzerland	20	16,203	15,364
Congo	60	3,187	273
Equatorial Guinea	66	2,391	304
Chad	77	1,878	62
Gabon	83	1,285	166
Luxembourg	85	434	963
Haiti	88	551	774
Côte d'Ivoire	91	747	202
Cameroon	112	268	152
Madagascar	113	253	164
Congo	119	318	77
Benin	120	0.4	393
Djibouti	138	2.9	196
Senegal	141	6.9	173
Niger	145	106	57
Guinea	146	67	92
Togo	154	6.6	123
Monaco	175	37	16
Rwanda	178	19	32
Seychelles	181	6.3	33
Mali	182	3.7	34
Central African Republic	183	3.4	30

Table 10, Continued

COUNTRY/TERRITORY	RANK	IMPORTS TO US*	EXPORTS FROM US*
Burkina Faso	187	1.8	25
Reunion	190	8.5	9.1
Burundi	195	4.1	8.4
Vanuatu	207	1.8	3.7
Comoros	213	1.1	1.9

\* in millions of dollars [some figures rounded]

One could continue this inquiry into the United States's complex economic relationship with the Francophone world by considering, for example, US direct investment in French-speaking countries, where Canada ranks second, Switzerland fifth, and France eighth, which certainly shows the importance of a significant part of the Francophone world. In terms of foreign direct investment in the US, it is worth noting that France ranks fifth, Canada sixth, Luxembourg seventh, and Switzerland eighth. Yet another relationship worthy of further investigation concerns US aid to French-speaking countries (in 2007 the top recipients were Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and Rwanda), both in terms of the amount and nature of such aid, and the circumstances leading to the awarding of such aid (US Census Bureau Foreign Trade Statistics website).

The wealth of information available in the above rankings, and in others, should certainly provide business French instructors and their students with multiple options for further research. The rankings demonstrate, to a certain degree, the relative status of individual countries, yet mere statistics cannot possibly convey the full scope of how these countries and/or regions operate on a global scale. Nor do these tables always reveal regional particularities and concerns, such as disease, famine, drought, interethnic relationships and conflict, that often extend beyond political boundaries. Only more thorough research into specific issues will ultimately allow students and instructors alike to obtain a satisfactory level of comprehension of one particular nation or issue, or of *la Francophonie* as it functions locally, regionally, globally, and over the course of time. This introduction to a comparative analysis of the French-speaking world will hopefully serve as a springboard for such future investigations.

APPENDIX  
OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

WEBSITES FEATURING COUNTRY RANKINGS

Aneki.com list of country rankings

<<http://www.aneki.com/>>

Country Risk list of country rankings

<[http://www.countryrisk.com/guide/archives/cat\\_country\\_rankings.html](http://www.countryrisk.com/guide/archives/cat_country_rankings.html)>

*The Economist* Intelligence Unit's Quality-of-Life Index

<[http://www.economist.com/media/pdf/quality\\_of\\_life.pdf](http://www.economist.com/media/pdf/quality_of_life.pdf)>

Freedom House: Freedom of the Press

<<http://www.freedomhouse.org>>

GlobalEdge list of rankings

<<http://globaledge.msu.edu/resourcedesk/rankings/>>

Photius.com list of country rankings

<<http://www.photius.com/rankings/>>

Reporters without Borders Press Freedom Index

<<http://en.rsf.org/>>

US Census Bureau Foreign Trade Statistics

<<http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/index.html>>

WEBSITES PROVIDING INFORMATION ON INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

BBC Country Profiles

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country\\_profiles/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country_profiles/default.stm)>

GlobalEdge Country Insights

<<http://globaledge.msu.edu/countryInsights/>>

International Trade Center (UNCTAD/WTO)

<<http://www.intracen.org/menus/countries.htm>>

Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie

<<http://www.francophonie.org/>>



United Nations Conference on Trade and Development  
Country Fact Sheets

<<http://www.unctad.org/Templates/Page.asp?intItemID=3198&lang=1>>

US Commercial Service Country Commercial Guides

<[http://www.buyusainfo.net/adsearch.cfm?search\\_type=int&loadnav=no](http://www.buyusainfo.net/adsearch.cfm?search_type=int&loadnav=no)>

US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis,  
International Economic Accounts

<<http://bea.gov/international/index.htm>>

US Department of State Background Notes

<<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>>

USAID

<<http://www.usaid.gov>>

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